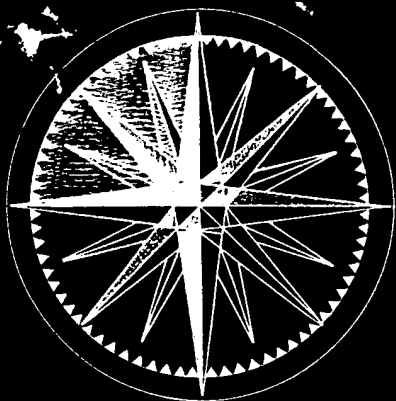


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31 January 1964

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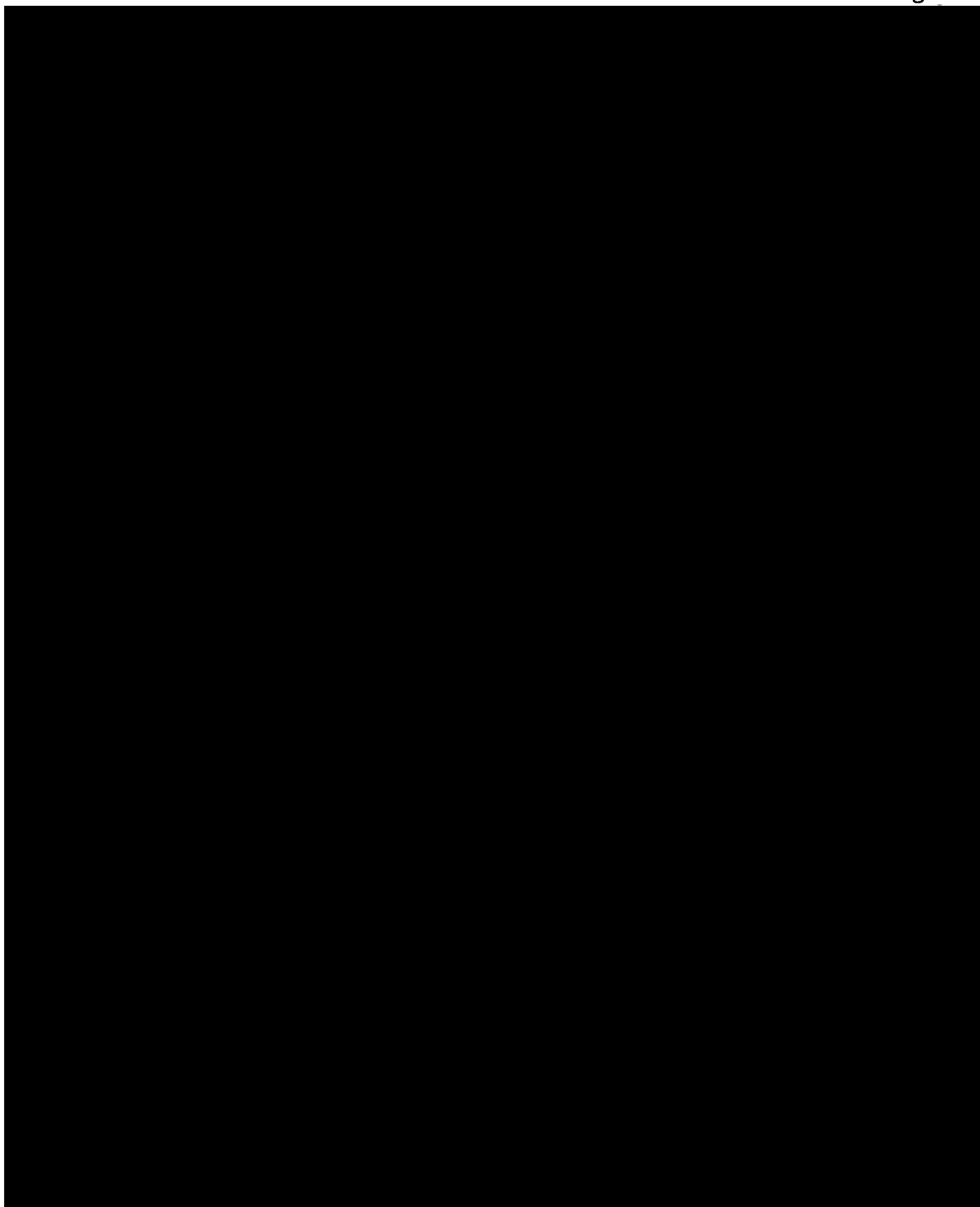
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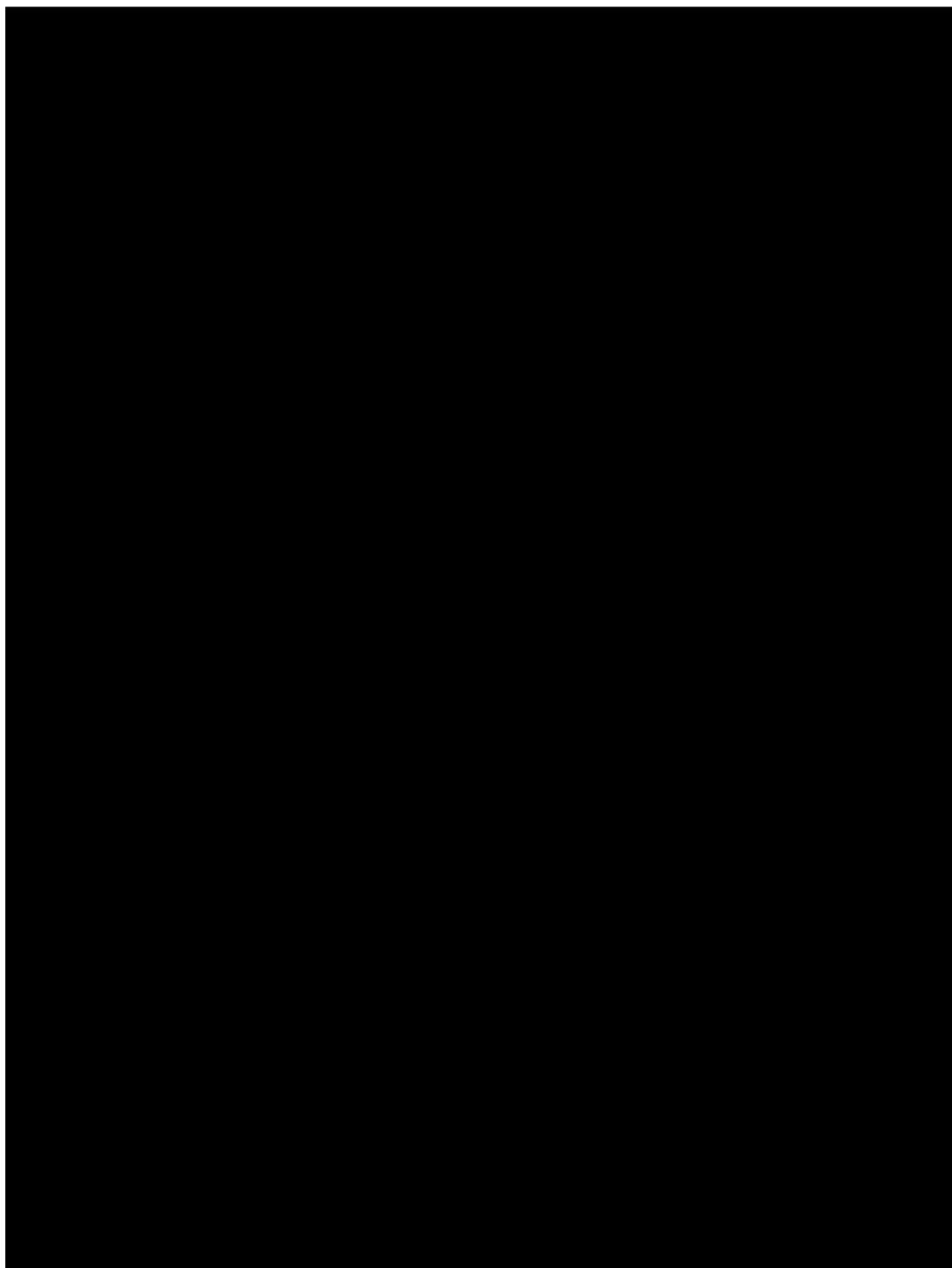
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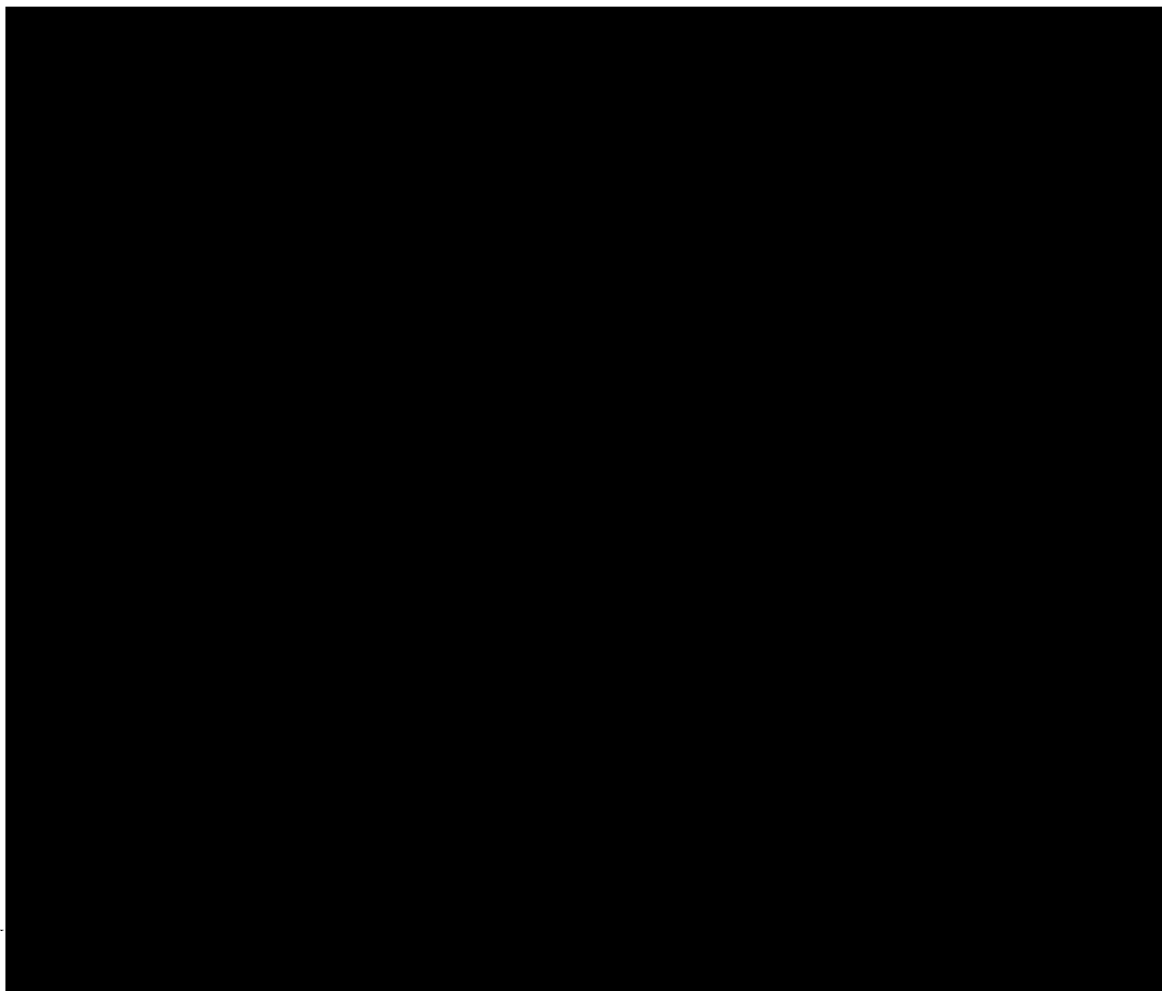


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Asia-Africa

TROUBLES MOUNT FOR SYRIAN REGIME

The Baathist military regime in Syria is internally divided, unpopular, and increasingly isolated from Syria's Arab neighbors, and an attempt may be made at any time to oust Prime Minister Amin al-Hafiz.

Factionalism within the ruling National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC) derives from differences between moderate and doctrinaire approaches to the Baath's Arab socialism as well as from personal rivalries. Hafiz has attempted to form a broader power base by trying to moderate the strict Baathist doctrine. He has also made overtures to various non-Baathist and anti-Nasir political groups. These moves may have succeeded only in alienating the more doctrinaire NCRC members.

The most likely leader of any move to unseat Hafiz is the deputy prime minister, Major General Mohammed Umran.

[REDACTED] Al-though formerly a doctrinaire, Umran, like Hafiz, now reportedly has moderated his approach to Baathist socialism.

[REDACTED] Hafiz probably is aware of many of these move-

ments, but may lack the solid support necessary to move against them.

The regime has been weakened by its estrangement from Iraq since the mid-November army coup in Baghdad and the new Iraqi Government's gradual rapprochement with Nasir. Syria became further isolated by Hafiz' overly militant approach to the Israeli problem at the recent Arab summit conference, which antagonized most other Arab government leaders. Recent press statements attributed to Syrian leaders indicate that the regime now may realize how precarious its position is and be seeking, at least outwardly, some limited rapprochement with Nasir.

At home the Damascus regime has tried to win some support by taking an increasingly pragmatic approach to Syria's economic problems. It has announced a liberalization of controls on foreign trade and the establishment of a limited free market in foreign exchange. It hopes these moves will ensure Syria's eligibility for International Monetary Fund credits as well as mollify the domestic business community. No firm assurances against further nationalization have been offered, however, and the regime evidently has gained little if any popular support. [REDACTED]

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